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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

Mr. Bruce 1443  
EXCISE  
B6

DATE: October 23, 1952

SUBJECT: The Situation of William H. Catis,

PARTICIPANTS:

The Acting Secretary  
Mrs. William H. Catis  
Harold C. Vedeler - EE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY CEE DATE 7-1-81

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EE  
Ambassador Wadsworth  
American Embassy, Prague

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During visits here yesterday and today with Mr. Perkins, Ambassador Wadsworth and the appropriate officers of EE, Mrs. Catis called this morning to discuss the situation of her husband. After I had greeted her she referred to the discussions which she had already had in the Department and to the recent meeting of our Charge d'Affaires at Prague, Nat B. King, with Mr. Catis, an account of which I had given her by telephone on October 7 and subsequently by letter.

I mentioned that the Czechoslovak Government had now sent a new Ambassador to this country and when he called the first time at the Department a few days ago I had taken occasion to point out that the bad state of relations between the US and Czechoslovakia could not be improved unless Mr. Catis was released. The President would receive the Ambassador tomorrow and would probably make the same point as would Ambassador Wadsworth when he arrived in Czechoslovakia.

I said that a new US Ambassador at Prague in pressing for the release of her husband might well be a good thing in that the Czechoslovak Government would then have further reason to believe that the US interest in seeking the release of Mr. Catis was not just a personal cause of our previous diplomatic representative but a matter of continuing urgent importance to this Government. The new Ambassador might thus make greater impact and emphasize more clearly the continuity of our interest and effort.

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The conversation turned to the difficulty of understanding why the Communists continued to hold her husband. I said that this seemed very puzzling since they now apparently derived no benefit from his continued imprisonment. This was a part of the irrationality of the Communists but this very irrationality might contain an element of hope - the hope that some day they might suddenly release him without explanation. Mrs. Gatis suggested that she herself had come to look upon her husband's situation in this light and thus prepared for waiting some considerable time longer, if necessary, or for receiving news any day that his freedom was at hand.

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I had the impression that as she talked freely of her problems today she had conducted herself during the past months with admirable judgment and restraint.

When she departed, I said that I was glad that she had come and that I had had a chance to see her. I wanted to tell her how very well she had acted in these trying circumstances. I wished that I could say something cheerful but I could not. I knew she was realistic and would understand the situation. She hoped that the Communists at Prague would be moved to free her husband soon and that she would not need to come again to the Department on such a mission as the present one. She expressed her appreciation for this meeting and for everything which the Department had done.

David Bruce  
Acting Secretary

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